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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the nature of social change and the special needs of youth, and innovation in the teaching of social studies at the secondary level. Drawing on curriculum experiments begun in 1967, a new social studies program of non-graded instructional modules was inaugurated in 1969 concentrating in 3 areas: 1) United States Realities, 2) World Realities, 3) Governmental Realities. Format focuses upon change in two specific areas: relevancy and flexibility. First, characteristics of such a relevant social studies curriculum are that it: 1) considers crucial urgencies of our times; 2) is not an isolated look at events of the past; 3) is an educational strategy that asks the student to consider important questions, develop hypotheses, gather evidence, synthesize data, and draw conclusions. In addition maximum flexibility is necessary to: 1) maintain relevancy, 2) individualize learning, 3) employ effectively the individual educational team members, and 4) allocate space, content materials, and multi-media facilities efficiently. Under the Kennedy High School design the student is offered 31 six week modules for selected study with no required modules or sequence. Diagrams of the first year sequence and the 31 modules are included, as well as references used in preparing the paper. (Author/JSB)

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Educational Reconstruction and Today's Social Studies

by Ralph Piagman and Richard Pitner

It is a lamentable fact that a man of retirement age could today walk into thousands of social studies classrooms across the United States and find striking similarity between the curriculum structure, the educational objectives and methods, and the content of the 1969 classroom and that which he experienced as a boy nearly a half century ago.

I

And it is a fact that remains despite much ferment in the social studies in recent years. The old world history course has been replaced in several schools with a more dynamic world cultures course. The black American has found his way into American History. Sociology and psychology programs have been developed in some school districts, and occasionally United States government has become comparative government or political process. More importantly, some social studies teachers have begun shifting from memoriazztion of facts to conceptual understanding and skill development, from one textbook to multiple and multi-media resources, from one teacher and thirty students to a team of teachers and varying sizes of student groups, and from lecturing to self-directed student inquiry and even the simulation of social realitites in the classroom. But though these modifications appear substantial, change has been painfully slow and piecemeal with the old curriculum structure all too

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often remaining essentially intact.

The transition to conceptual understanding, skill development, multiple and multi-media resources, simulation, instructional teams, and an inquiry strategy must be completed in social studies classrooms throughout the nation as quickly as possible. But there will be no time to savor the rewards of these accomplishments. Further change and fresh innivations are as essential as they are unavoidable. It is time for us, in the words of Walter Lipman, "to come alive and to be apart of and to show wigor, and not to keep nothing the same old slogans, andnot to dawdle along in the same old ruts."[1]

Certainly the most compelling reality facing education is the concept of change in the world — change more encompassing, more universal, more demanding, perhaps even more frightening thatn ever before. As John W. Gardner has written, the most important aspect of our future is "change is the tempo of change."[2] Change in secondary school social studies will need to be directly correlated to the changing lives of today's adolescents. And their lives are changing. Today's teenagers, the "television generation" that Marshall McLuhan has written about, are demanding involvement. McLuhan offers a perceptive anlysis:

> The young people of which have experienced a decade of TV have naturally imbibed an urge toward involvement in depth that makes all the remote visualized goals of usual culture seem not only unreal but irrelevant, and not only irrelevant, but anemic. It is the total involvement in an all-inclusive nowness that occurs in young lives via TV's mosaic image . . . The TV child expects involvement . . . He does want a role and a deep commitment to his society.
>
> The TV child cannot see ahead because he wants involvement, and he cannot accept a fragmentary and merely visualized goal or destiny in learning or in life.[3]

Today's teenagers are no longer trusting one textbook. They reject dry lectures. They will not tolerate mediocrity. They will respect a teacher as a human being, but not as an institution. They are perceptive and concerned people and they want to be accepted as such. Relegate them to classroom spectators and they want to turn you off, perhaps rebel. Give them a role, involve them, and the result may be remarkable.

It is today's generation of young people that pointed the way toward political reform when they almost singe-handedly made Eugene McCarthy an important presidential candidate. Students have taken an active role in urging changes in our nation's foreign policy. They have loudly and unrelentingly demanded improved and more relevant educational programs from high schools, colleges and universities. They have called for justice, tolerance, equality, and respect for the dignity of all men while many adults have silently watched. Today's students have rejected hypocrisy, phoniness, and put-ons and have called for truth, honesty, and meaning in man's relationships with man. They have grasped the urgency of our times and have gone to Mississippi to regeister black voters, to Latin America and Africa to teach men how to read and write, to Spanish Harlem in New York City to develop community youth programs, to Georgia to integrate lunch counters, and to Chicago to build a "new politics."

They have marched, protested, sat-in, boycotted, knocked on dors, handed out leaflets, loved-in, held rallies, sung songs, worn buttons, read poems, let their hair grow to their shoulders and their skirts rise to their thighs and usually for a sound purpose. Violence has sometimes

replaced reason, uncleanliness has often been confused with individuality, the battle for freedom of expression has at times degenterated into rejection of established law and common decency, but the record of no generation has been perfect.

Today's students reflect change in the value structure of this nation change in the nature of the world, change in life itself. If education is to meet their new needs and direct their new energies it will need to adjust to their new lives. Too often in the past, however, the institution that is education has failed to offer the student opportunities for meaningful experiences, experiences that are relevant to his life. Instead it has perhaps been as Professor Edgar Z. Friedenberg has suggested. Adolescents may have been among the "last social groups in the world to be given the full nineteenth century colonial treatment."[4] After decades of procrastination and restrained change, even stagnation, it may well be time for educators to make bold new plans.

II

From the opening of Cedar Rapids' John F. Kennedy Senior High School in the fall of 1967 there has been a search for relevancy in an atmosphere of experimentation. Double classrooms encuraged the immediate formation of two man teams in the American Studies Program which led, several months later, to expanded four and five man teams that included all instructors assigned to a particular course. The nearly complete abandonment of lectures and textbooks facilitated

emphasis on student inquiry, simulation, and educational games. The most significant result has been increased student involvement in the educational process.

The Social Studies Department at Kennedy High School has tried to involve students in a variety of relevant experiences. In the spring of 1968 students participated in a simulated Republican National Nominating Convention, complete with organ music, credentials, keynote speakers (Iowa Governor Robert Ray and other State and Congressional candidates), balloons, television taping crews, and an abundance of campaign posters and placareds. As delegate after delegate approached themicrophones during the frustrating platform fight to speak out on Vietnam, a minimum wage for migratory workers, open housing legislation, or electoral reform; as the cheering increased until the ceiling on the auditorium seemed in danger as the fifth ballot reached the crucial state of Virginia and "the next President of the United States" was about to be nominated; and as the student playing the role of Richard Nixon entered the auditorium to a standing and thunderous ovation after receiving the presidential nomination, we saw student involvement and understanding grow.

When well over one hundred students wearing campaign hats and carrying signs met presidential hopeful Nelson Rockefeeller as he entered Cedar Rapids and campaigned with him for several hours, we saw active student involvement. When other students did the same for vice-presidential candidate Spiro Agnew; when students went to Des Moines to greet Senator Eugene McCarthy and Vice-President Hubert Humphrey; when students attended the county and state Democratic and Republican conventions and

participated in floor demonstrations and political persuasion; and when students actively campaigned for local, state, and national candidates, we again observed relevant student involvement.

In the summer of 1969 seventy-five students began the arduous work of opening channels of communication between their middle and upper middle class neighborhood and Oak-Hill Jackson, a racially-mixed and predominantly lower income neighborhood that the city had too long and too completely ignored. The students called their idea Community Action and set out to raise four thousand dollars to begin a summer recreational program for nearly three hundred Oak-Hill Jackson children. They recruited adults from both communities to help administer the program and solicited the cooperation of the Jane Boyd Community House, an important Oak-Hill Jackson instituition. Within a few weeks the concern and imagination of the Kennedy students had created ten little league baseball teams and fifteen squads of eight to eleven year old girls participating in picnics, camp-outs, drama productions, movies, talent shows and games. By late August Community Action was a solid achievement that had attracted the interest of many residents of the city. Already fall and winter plans were being planned. The new friendships that had begun, the insights that were emerging, and the empathy that had developed provided almost irrefutable evidence that the Kennedy Social Studies Department had facilitated an involving and relevant experience for students.

Too often, however, new techniques and promising innovations have been applied to social studies curriculum structures neither acceptable

in their current form nor readily adaptable to change. The Kennedy Social Studies Department has reached the conclusion that the new curriculum structure, with its three or four required courses, its upper level electives subscribed to by a tiny minority of students, its emphasis on history, its stifling and inhibiting confines, its rigidity, its compartmentalization, its resisance to change, and its sacred traditions, must succumb to a changing world. Drawing on the experiences of the past two years and convinced that more dramatic a change is imperative, a new social stuides program for the senior high school, a non-graded program of instructional modules, was inaugurated at Kennedy in the fall of 1969. The format for the new program focuses upon change, redirection, and realignment of priorities in two specific areas: relevancy and flexibility. (Diagrams on Pages 15 and 16)

III

A relevant social studies curriculum demand that the student reconsider his concerns, his hopes, his feelings, and his understandings vis-a-vis people, human problems, and the total world.

(A) A relevant soical studies curriculum cooaiders the crucial urgenicies of our times. Hollis L. Caswell, President Emeritus, Teachers College, Columbia University, has outlined several of the awesome challenges that face mankind:

> (1) We must learn to live with great uncertainity and with ever present danger in our international reltions. . .land move step by step toward achievemnet of a durable peace. . . the alternative is a war of destruction.

(2) Somehow people of various cultures who hold different values and have markedly different customs must learn to live side by side in harmony and with mutual respect, dealing constructively with problems which inevitably intertwine their destinies.

(3) We must discover how to use atomic energy to foster the well-being of mankind.

(4) Automation promises a second industrial revolution, or as you prefer, the extension of industrialization to its ultimate development. . . .the years ahead will require that a greatly increased proportion of your people achieve mastery of intricate, high level skills.

(5) As machines replace men, less and less work time will be required to produce the materials we need. To what extent shall the substantial time that is free be devoted?

(6) Our world today is characterized by a per sense of insecurity and purposelessness. Many persons question the basic goals of life. . .

(7) The extension of mass organization in many aspects of our life thertens submergence of the individual.[5]

To Caswell's list we would add pollution of the atmosphere and the almost incredibly ruthless exploitation of natural resources, the revolution of rising expectations and the growing conflict between the haves and the have nots, the compelling demands of the third world peoples for self-determination, equality, and justice, and the complex interrelationships between the challenges of our age. Today's problems may ultimately become irrelevant, but students who are involved in the urgencies contemporary to their high school years will, we believe, acquire the analytical skills and attitudes that will be useful, perhaps invaluable, throughout their lives.

(A) A relevant social studies curriculum is not an isolated look at events of the past. Relevancy is not a detailed examination

of the Spanish-American War (1898), but it may be an investigation into the role of the United States in the world today, and that investigation might include an analysis of the circumstances surrounding the emergence of the United States as a world power at the turn of this century.

(C) A relevant social studies curriculum is an educational strategy that asks the student to consider important questions, develop hypotheses, gather evidence, synthesize data, and draw conslusions. It urges him to get involved. It brings him into meaningful contact with reality. It develops the skills that the student will need to live in our complex world. It promotes creative thought and problem solving. It encourages empathy, curiousity and open-mindedness. It rejects memorization, easy answers to difficult questions, and non-involvement or emotional detachment.

IV

If relevancy is to be maintained, if learning is to be meaningfully individulized, if the backgrounds, interests, talents, and competencies of the instructional staff are to be efficiently utilized, and if space, resource materials, and multi-media facilities are to be usefully allocated, flexibility in the social studies program is essential.

(A) Maximum flexibility is necessary if relevancy is to be maintained. The world changes. In 1850 air pollution was limited in dimension. Today the relevancy of that topic cannot be effectively challenged. There is at least the hope that with public awareness, technological development, and governmental response, its relevancy will be

diminished. Prejudice is a classic example of a problem that spans centuries, but whose dimensions are continually changing. We propose to investigate and analyze the concerns and urgencies of the present and the future while gaining insight and perspective from the past. Really we are convinced that students are effective judges of what is relevant to them and that to ignore their concerns is to miss the point of secondary social studies. They must be continually consulted, and if their recommendations are to be utilized, flexibility in the program is essential.

(B) Maximum flexibility is necessary if learning is to be individualized. There is no logical explanation for requiring an eleventh grader to study world cultures for nine months at that particular time in his life. He may be interested in the tenth or twelfth grade, his interest may fluctuate throughout his three years in the senior high school, or he may never be interested. Under the Kennedy design, the student is offered several instructional modules from a wide offering in each of three areas: United States Realitits, World Realitites, and Governmental Realities. Under the World Realities column, for example, the student must select for modules from the sixteen offered. The student may pursue a topic when his interest is highest and he may pursue those aspects of the topic that interest him the most. At the sam e time , the minimal requirements will insure the student's exposure to the broad spectrum of the social studies. There will be no required modules. In every case a student will be pursuing a particular topic by his own choice. If his interest in a module is sifficient, he may pursue it even

further in an independent study program. We are convinced that sequence is unimportant. If a student is interested in racial confrontation in the United States, poverty in the world, the culture of the Soviet Union, and the conflict between liberty and order in the United States we will give him an opportunity to investigate each, but we are not concerned about the order in which he studies them. The instructional staff will advise, facilitate, and attempt to stimulate the student, but he will be an active partner in analyzing his interests and concerns, planning his individual progarm, and in the learning process itself.

Co-ordination in the development of skills is an important part of the Kennedy system of instructioanl modules in the social studies. All modules will be designed to develop a range of skills but the degree of emphasis on any particular skill will, of course, vary from module to module. A two week introduction and a two week conclusion emphasizing skill and attitudal development will be included evry year for all students.

(C) Maximum flexibility is necessary if the individual characteristics of the educational team members are to be effectively employd. The individual characteristics of the instructors are as significant as those of the students. An instructional staff determined to divide tasks and responsibilities among the team members on the basis of talents, backgrounds, training, interests, and personalities of the individuals involved will, of necissity, remain flexible. An instructor can have neither his course, nor his room, nor his students. Yet in a larger sense, by maximizing his contribution to the team effort, all courses.

all activities, all rooms,and all students will be, in part, his responsibility.

Students must be included as active participants with meaningful roles in the educational team. Their role cannot degenerate into that of spectator or programmed puppet. At Kennedy many students occupy unique roles as teaching assistants attending department meetings, and assisting in the development and implementation of the social studies curriculum. An additional benefit derives as students are exposed to more that one teacher. The individual student has a much higher probability of building meaningful relationshlps with several teachers on the professional staff.

To put it simply, a flexible team can maximize educational opportunities. A wider range of experiences and a greater number of alternatives can be offered. The total effect is substantially greater th n the sum of the fragmented parts. The cooperation and teamwork essential in today's world can be effectively practiced.

(D) Maximum flexibility is necessary for the efficient allocation of space, content materials,and multi-media facilities. Rooms, bobks, magazines and reprints, records, films, audio and video tapes, projection and recording equipment, vertical files, tables and desks can be utilized most effectively if flexibility in the instructional program is permitted.

V

As media re the extensions of man, so the curriculum is the media

or the extension of the astute social sudies instructor. And the medium may be the message, or as McLuhan explains, "the social consequences of any medium. . .result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves. . . ."[6] Hot media extend a single sense in 'high definition.' They leave little to be filled in by the listener. They develop fragmentation and specialism and require only a meager level of participation. But hot media are the extensions of another generation. McLuhan writes:

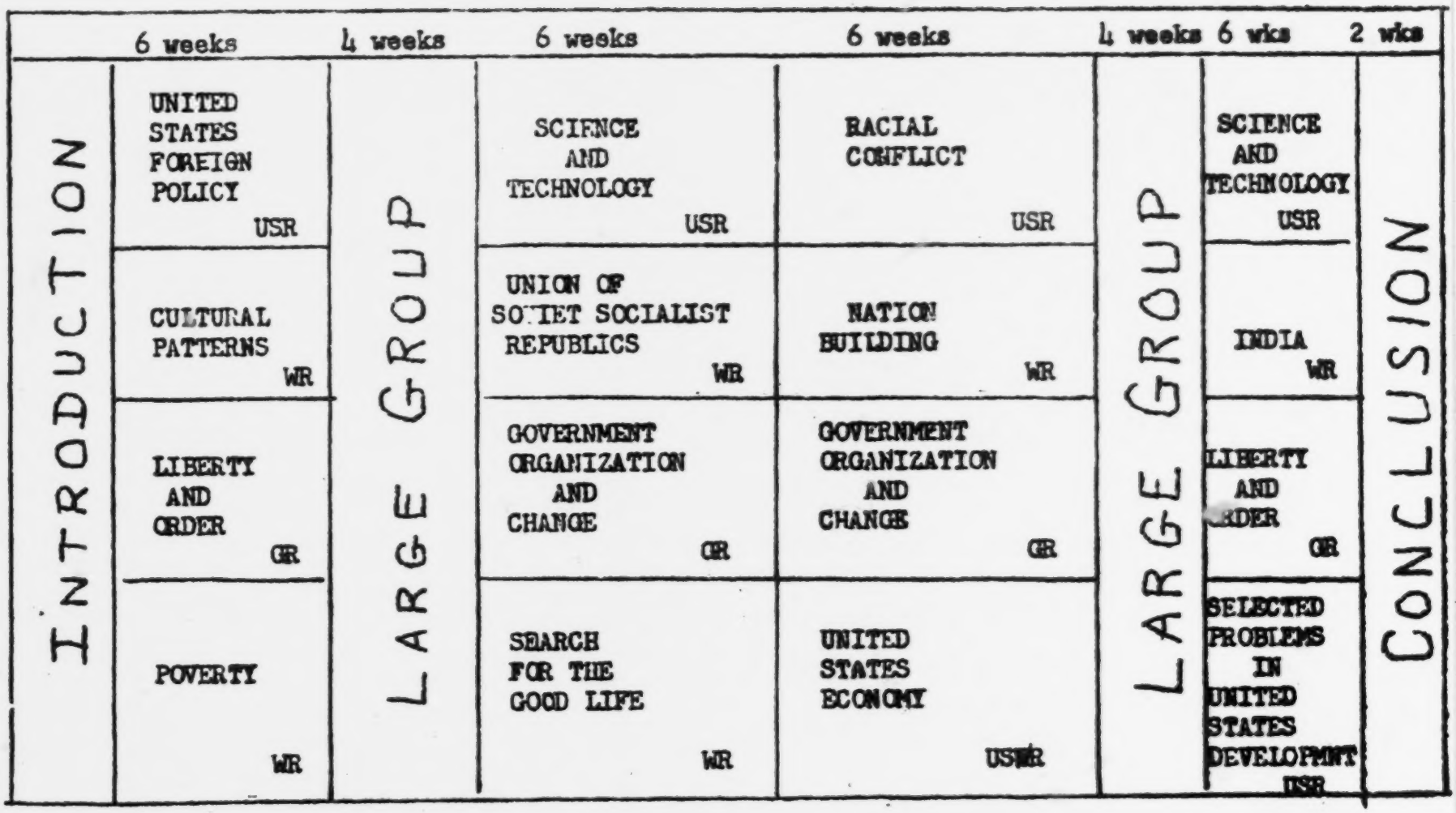
> The aspiration of our time for wholeness, empahy, and depth of awareness is a natural adjunct of our electric technology. . .mark of our time is its revulsion against imposed patters. We are suddenly eager to have things and people declare their beings totally .[7] =

Correspondingly, "hot" media and social studies curricula are unsatisfactory and irrelevant to today's generation of young people. A lineal, fragmented, print-oriented, subject-divided curriculum is no longer acceptable. Social studies education needs " cooling " off. Courses per se must be abandoned and in their place a unified and relevant program must be offered. Students must be able to move freely from topic to topic as their interests suggest, knowing that all of their activities are part of a meaningful whole. They must be given the opportunity to have infact, involving experiences. Student participation in the affairs of the social studies department must be maximized. Whether those experiences can be extended from only the visual to a more balanced sensroy level is now only supposition. It seems likely, however, that if significant things are to happen in that direction the traditional character of the social studies classroom must pass through dramatic change. Whether the

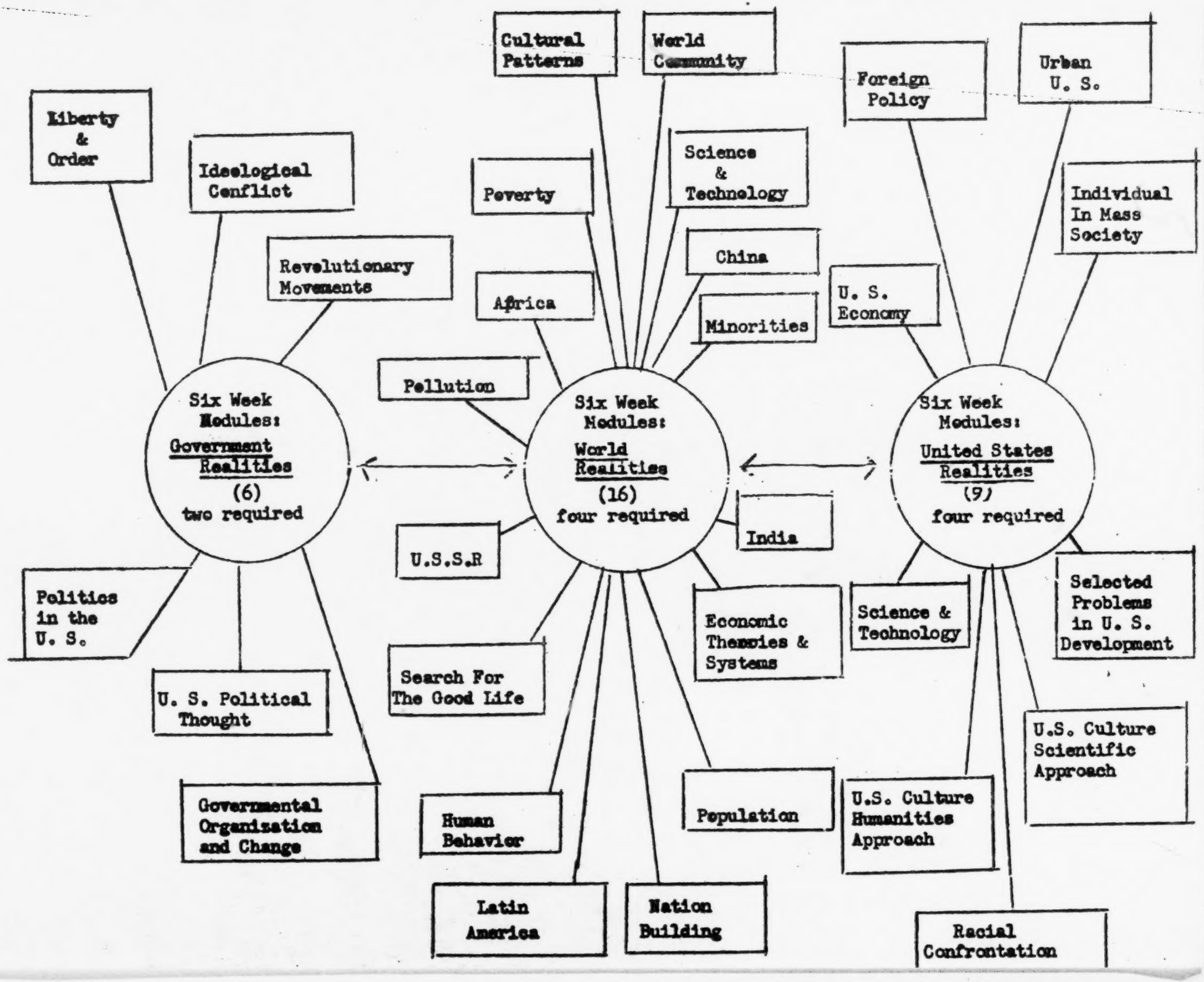
confines of that room can almost literally be extended to include the entire community or, indeed, the entire world is a subject for interesting speculation.

While the social perception, educational theory, and instructional strategies that we offer are not represented as being complete or final answers, they are suggested as a functioning demonstration of planning towards a socia studies stressing relevancy, involvement, understanding, inquiry, and human relationships. The irony of our analysis, should it be correct, is that if social studies is to become a unified and relevant program withoiut the rigidity of "courses" perhaps that principle ought to be applied to the entire high school experience. And if the high school is to become a unified and relevant program withouth the rigidity of 'disciplines' the demise of social studies as a discipline may be initiated by the rebirth we are recommending. Learning experiences and thought patters, too ofen stifled by artificial classroom and subject matter compartmentalization, are in reality inter-related and simultaneous processes. As a replacement for the traditional high school course structure, we would suggest a relevant, problem-oriented, menaingful, inter-disciplinary educational experience.

Educational reconstruction should begin with the social studies. Now.



The diagram shows the instructional module plan for the first year of a three year sequence of the Kennedy social studies program. Thirty-one six week instructional modules are being developed. Sixteen will be offered each year. In a three year sequence all thirty-one would be offered at least once and several will be repeated. Twice each year students will participate in four week large group projects. Topics will be pertinent to the issues of the day. For example, in the spring of 1972 a national nominating convention will be offered. Simulation will be a frequent strategy in the four week blocks, but students may elect independent or smallgroup investigations. Each of the student's three years in the social studies program will begin with a two week introductory module emphasizing useful social science techniques and attitudes. Following the introduction the student will immediately begin work in his first six week module, the first of four for the year. Each of the student's three years in the social studies program will be completed with a two week summary and concluding module. Students must choose two of five instructional modules in Government Realities, four of nine in United States Realities, and four of sixteen offerings in World Realities. Three disjointed years of compulsory and abstract history-government courses become three inter-related years of a social studies program.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U.S. Culture Scientific Approach
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Nation Building
Racial Confrontation

FOOTNOTES

[1]John F. Kennedy, The Strategy of Peace (New York: Popular Library, 1960), p. 241.

[2]John W. Gardner, "Impact of Change on Education," Vital Issues in American Education. Ed. Alice and Lester D. Crow, (New York: Bantim Books, 1964), p.2.

[3]Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 292.

[4]Edgar Z. Friedenb erg, Coming of Age in America (New York: Random House, 1963), p.4.

[5]Hollis L. Caswell, "Great Challenges for Education," Vital Issues in American Education. Ed. Alice and Lester D. Ctow (New York: Bantam Books, 1964) pp. 29-30.

[6]McLuhan, IBid., p. 23.

[7]Ibid., p. 21.